

# WATAC NEWS



VOL 20: NO 4

WOMEN AND THE AUSTRALIAN CHURCH

DECEMBER 2009

**WATAC Administration Officer:** Helen Coles 9520 9409 Mailing address: Box 37/121 Anzac Avenue, Engadine, 2233

Website address: [www.watac.net](http://www.watac.net) email: [watac@people.net.au](mailto:watac@people.net.au) A.B.N. 48 406 052 808

NEWSLETTER EDITOR: BERNICE MOORE

TYPESETTING/DESIGN: MARGARET KNOWLDEN  
Email: [knowlden@optusnet.com.au](mailto:knowlden@optusnet.com.au)

## What is Advent About?

Ideas in Passing from Joan Chittister

A friend recently gave me a textile wall-hanging from Peru that makes clear that the process of finding God in the small things of life is as profound as it is simple. A pastoral scene of palm trees and rural lean-tos has been hand-stitched by peasant women, quilt-style, across the top of a felt banner. Under it is a calendar of thirty small pockets, each of them filled with something we can't see. Every day until Christmas, we are invited to find the part of the scene that has been pocketed for that day and attach it to the scene above, one piece of hand-woven cloth adhering to the other as we go.

Some of the pieces are of benign and beautiful things; some are not. There are bumblebees and angels, wild animals and dry straw, a branch-laden peasant man and a weary-looking woman. But there at the end of the days, as common as all the rest of the items in the scene, is the manger, the sign of the One who knows what life is like for us, who has mixed His own with ours. Now, we can see, all our expectations have been worth it.

Advent is about learning to wait. It is about not having to know exactly what is coming tomorrow, only that whatever it is, it is of the essence of sanctification for us. Every piece of it, some hard, some uplifting, is sign of the work of God alive in us. We are becoming as we go. We learn in Advent to stay in the present, knowing that only the present well-lived can possibly lead us to the fullness of life.

Advent relieves us of our commitment to the frenetic in a fast-paced world. It slows us down. It makes us think. It makes us look beyond today to the "great tomorrow" of life. Without Advent, moved only by the race to nowhere that exhausts the world around us, we could be so frantic with trying to consume and control this life that we fail to develop within ourselves a taste for the spirit that does not

die and will not slip through our fingers like melted snow.

It is while waiting for the coming of the reign of God, Advent after Advent, that we come to realize that its coming depends on us. What we do will either hasten or slow, sharpen or dim our own commitment to do our part to bring it.

Waiting – that cold, dry period of life when nothing seems to be enough and something else beckons within us – is the grace that Advent comes to bring. It stands before us, within us, pointing to the star for which the wise ones from the East are only icons of ourselves.

We all want something more. Advent asks the question, what is it for which you are spending your life? What is the star you are following now? And where is that star in its present radiance in your life leading you? Is it a place that is really comprehensive enough to equal the breadth of the human soul?

from *The Liturgical Year* by Joan Chittister  
(Thomas Nelson)

## A Christmas message

With so many decent people, I long for peace in our world and a greater sharing of resources. I often say that, if we were committed to a war against poverty with the same zeal as the war against terror, the latter threat would be diminished as we would be recognising every person in the world as our sister or brother. The prevailing attitude in Australia to refugees and asylum seekers greatly disappoints me.

I hope that Christmas is a happy time for us all, a time to appreciate the good things which Jesus offers us and the opportunity to experience peace and joy ...

*Bishop Pat Power*

# Reflecting on Our WATAC Year

## Bernice Moore

The marvels of God are not brought forth from one's self  
Rather, it is more like a chord, a sound that is played  
The tone does not come out of the chord itself,  
But rather, thru the touch of the musician  
I am, of course, the lyre and harp of God's kindness

*Hildegard of Bingen*

These words of Hildegard of Bingen seem to capture the lives of all of us who have joined together as WATAC. This year we have made and experienced young, beautiful music. Indeed it is hard to believe that Christmas music is now filling our minds and hearts and 2010 is on the near horizon.

Looking back through another amazing year there were two outstanding and wonderful moments: the WATAC Conference 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> May and the Luncheon at NSW Parliament House on 10<sup>th</sup> September. They were both 'pure music', there's no doubt; the words of our speakers filled our hearts and minds and participants created beautiful harmony.

It would be hard to capture in a few words the diversity and giftedness of the various and many WATAC groups that gather regularly and give life to each other. They are all enabled by the hands-on work of many people who open their homes for meetings, others who prepare discussion materials and prayerful reflections, and the many who travel from far and near to be 'Christ for the other'. Sincere thanks to all of them.

There was a very special meeting on Saturday, 17<sup>th</sup> October, when an enthusiastic group gathered at Blackheath in the Blue Mountains. The focus of the day was the film *As It Is in Heaven*. Those of you who have seen it will know the joy and challenge of the discussion the film stimulates in a like-minded group. There were about twenty-six women and men there and the energy level was beyond measure! We were all reluctant to see the day end but a follow-up meeting was arranged. Not everyone could be there, but we gathered at Mary Maguire's home on Saturday morning, 28<sup>th</sup> November. Once again it was a great moment and the major outcome was the decision to form a WATAC group in the Blue Mountains! All the essential elements (venue, dates and times) were decided on so things look very good. Thanks to the work of Carmel Vanny and Mary Maguire, 2010 looks very promising for the wonderful 'Choir' formed through *As It Is in Heaven* at Blackheath. 'From little things big things grow' as the Kev Carmody and Paul Kelly song says.

Another November WATAC event was organised by Rosemary Breen in Inverell. Those of you who have met Rosemary know how many amazing things she is involved in: Shelter (support for refugees), Disabilities Support Group, Women's Refuge, Indigenous Issues and WATAC, to name but a few. Rosemary's women's group meet on a Thursday afternoon each week, so she invited me to join them on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> November. What a great time we shared together; our focus for discussion was Robert Blair Kaiser's book 'A Church in Search of Itself'. Due to time constraints we just concentrated on the Epilogue - *Modest Proposals*; if you haven't read this book, be good to yourself and

### Contents

Joan Chittister: <i>What is Advent About?</i> .....	1
Bishop Pat Power: <i>A Christmas Message</i> .....	1
Bernice Moore: <i>Reflecting on our WATAC Year</i> .....	2-3
Margaret Day: <i>Student Interfaith Dialogue</i> .....	4-5
Matt van Gestel: <i>Women, Religion and Peace - Why am I here...</i>	6-7
Robert Mickens: <i>Phan spells out goals of interfaith dialogue</i> .....	8
The Tablet: <i>Bertone denies any 'reform of the reform'</i> .....	8
Joan Chittister: <i>Louise Akers: Silenced or louder than ever?</i> .....	9-10
John Marsden and Matt Ottley: <i>Home and Away</i> (promotion) .....	10
<i>Bernice Moore: And Also With You</i> .....	11
Michael G.. Ryan: <i>If We Said, 'Wait'</i> .....	12-13
Michael Sean Winters: <i>Bishops approve Missal translations</i> .....	14
NCR: <i>Women Religious not Complying with Vatican Study</i> .....	15-16
Farah Farouque: <i>Giving Saudi Women a public presence</i> .....	17
The Tablet: <i>Dublin Faces shortage of priests</i> .....	18
The Tablet: <i>Walsh urges open debate on priestly celibacy</i> .....	18
Keith O'Brien: <i>Stewards of Creation</i> .....	19-20
Elena Curti and Christopher Lamb: <i>Ready for Rome</i> .....	21-22
NCR: <i>Reversing the Liturgical Field</i> .....	23
NCR: Sr. Rose Pacatte: <i>Moore's new Movie</i> .....	24
Group Reports .....	25-27
Back page - Subscription Renewal .....	28

do so very soon. An inspiring quote in the book from Cardinal Murphy-O'Connor gave us hope, "We put too much emphasis on the pope. Real reform in the Church doesn't come from the top. It comes from below, from the people. We need more saints." And, even more encouraging Cardinal Pham Minh Man (Vietnam) is quoted as saying, "I would love to have one (a People's Church) if someone can just tell me how to get it". How good is that ?!!

On Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November WATAC organised an Inter-Faith session in Parliament House for Year 11 & 12 students. About 160 students and their teachers attended a great event – you can read about it in Marg Day's article in this Newsletter.

Because WATAC is an incorporated body we must have a formal Annual General Meeting each year before the end of June. This year's AGM was held on 27<sup>th</sup> June at the Mary Mackillop Centre, North Sydney, and Rosemary Breen was our guest speaker. We were a small group but it was a special moment of WATAC life and a group of generous women put up their hands to do all the on-going background work that keeps WATAC Inc functioning. This year's membership of the WATAC Inc. Committee includes: Jan Barnett, Janet Cain, Margaret Day, Kaye Hodge, Margaret Keyes, Margaret Knowlden, Alma Madden, Bernice Moore, Judi Powe and Maureen Watterson. Of course, to

use Hildegard of Bingen's symbol, these women are the 'lyre and harp of God's kindness' and WATAC is gifted by their lives and commitment.

Catholics for Ministry, a small but active group of which Paul Collins is a member, organised a meeting in Melbourne on Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> June. This meeting was designed to bring together representatives of grass-roots groups from around Australia. Margaret Day and I went on behalf of WATAC. It was a really good initiative which gave us all a chance to share and hear what various groups are doing in and beyond the Church. As always happens with such events, it was hard to all agree on suitable follow-up action but the moment itself was very valuable and WATAC has now connected with Catholics for Ministry and Paul Collins, and this has led to our present action regarding the upcoming translation of the Mass.

There was another special small gathering organised by Paul Collins on Sunday, 22<sup>nd</sup> November when the American theologian and author, Anthony Padovano, came to Sydney on his way to the World's Parliament of Religions in Melbourne. Anthony Padovano was a gentle, inspiring, hope-filled person and his message was one of joyful peace. This quotation from him holds a beautiful message for Christmas:

There is a time for hope because birth continues to happen and because  
more people treasure life than despise it.

There is time for hope because people find time to speak their values to  
one another, to love one another, to laugh with one another, and to tell  
one another that they have wept.

There is a time for hope because people build better than they destroy  
and because they wish to pray when they do not.

There is a time for hope because people believe in trust and hope for a  
better future.

There is a time for hope because people are happier when they heal one  
another than when they injure one another.

There is a time for hope because love has survived and the gospel has not  
been forgotten.

There is a time for hope because people know they are brothers and  
sisters, and because they keep looking for reasons to have faith in one  
another and in God.

There is a time for hope even when we die. For life was given to be  
accomplished and we all die with promises to keep.

There is a time for hope because we all know that there has been, in  
human history, time for the human heart.

# Student Interfaith Dialogue: Women, Religion and Peace

Theatrette of NSW Parliament House

17 November 2009

Margaret Day

Each year WATAC provides a forum for Year 11 and 12 students to engage in informed dialogue about the “distinctive response of religious traditions to the issue of peace”. The students were able to join in conversation with women members of the three different faith traditions who all worship and follow the tenets of the “God of Abraham”, though by different names and different paths – namely, in the order of their historic age, the Jewish, Christian and Islamic faiths.

This year, the students had the bonus of a fourth speaker who shared the story of his participation in a national consultation, “World Wide Views Australia on Global Warming”. WATAC wanted to make the students aware of this event as well as giving them an opportunity to explore the issue of Global Warming as a justice and peace issue. **Matthew Van Gestel** was chosen to be one of the 100 Australian participants at this event, *World Wide Views on Global Warming*. Matthew has been a self-confessed honorary member of WATAC, since our early WATAC conferences when he was our volunteer and wonderfully competent audio-visual technician.

Matthew was raised Catholic, the fourth child of a family of thirteen. He was born and educated in Holland, where he worked as a radio operator. In 1951 he migrated to Australia with limited English. For his first few years in Australia he worked for AWA, then joined the ABC where he worked for the next thirty years. He is a proud parent and grandparent – roles he shares with his wife Mary, a staunch and tireless worker for WATAC.

Matthew explained how he was selected to join *World Wide Views on Global Warming*; the process and findings of the Sydney event; and his own personal passion for and commitment to the environment.

**Tamkin Ansari** was the first of our women speakers. Tamkin was born in Afghanistan and is one of eight children. She left her homeland at the age of four to relocate with her family to India where she spent what she describes as a wonderful childhood. In 1992, Tamkin and her family moved to Australia as refugees and settled in Sydney’s Northern Beaches.

She is currently studying Psychology at Macquarie University and is an executive member of Affinity Intercultural Foundation, with which she has been involved for some six years.

Earlier this year Tamkin attended an international conference for Muslim youth in Malaysia representing young Australian Muslims. She is currently involved with the Christian and Muslim youth from the Northern Beaches working on a six-month project aimed at getting the youth together to discuss faith and spirituality from their respective faith traditions.

Tamkin explained how she had moved from being a fairly uncommitted Muslim to being a committed member of her faith group. In the immediate aftermath of September 11 Tamkin was inundated with questions from her non-Muslim friends and acquaintances, who expected her, as a Muslim, to be able to explain why this had happened. She, of course, could not explain the motivation for September 11, but she also realised she knew very little about her own religion.

Part of her new commitment involved her decision to wear the veil – a decision she did not find easy because she was worried about people’s reactions, both her own Muslim family’s negative reaction as well as the possible hostility of her non-Muslim neighbours. She was pleased to tell the students that these fears proved to be groundless and in fact many of her non-Muslim neighbours congratulated her on her courage to follow her convictions.

Tamkin’s response to September 11 has been her outstanding commitment to Affinity. She strongly advocated that we can all make a difference in creating a peaceful world by exploring and sharing our different faith traditions together.

Our third speaker, **Ilona Lee**, is now retired from her full time career in Education and Health in the field of multiculturalism. She now works fulltime in a voluntary capacity and is currently President of The Shalom Institute, member of the NSW Board of Deputies, Governor of the Jewish Communal Appeal and Director of OzHarvest.

OzHarvest is an excellent example of Ilona's passion for Social Justice. Every day in Sydney, thousands of kilos of high quality, nutritious food is thrown away, while people in our city go hungry. OzHarvest collects excess food and delivers it, free of charge, to organisations that feed disadvantaged men, women and children in our community.

Last year Ilona was awarded a much deserved AM (Member of the Order of Australia) for services to multicultural health and the Jewish community.

Ilona explained to the students how her Jewish faith permeated every aspect of her life and underpinned her daily commitments. She explained that she was just the same as every other working wife and mother, with the same demands on her time. Sabbath celebrations added extra demands and yet gave her valuable family time. She did not back away from her own internal conflict over the Israeli-Palestine dispute and gave the students insight into how her own faith and religious practice had changed and developed with her life journey and maturity.

Last, but not least, **Jan Barnett** represented the Christian and Catholic, tradition. She is a Sister of St Joseph, as well as a member of the WATAC Inc. Committee. For most of her religious life Jan has worked in secondary and tertiary education. She has a great passion for education and young people and has been principal of a number of Catholic secondary colleges.

Currently, Jan is the national chaplain for the Australian Young Christian Workers (YCW) which works to uphold basic human rights, especially the right to meaningful and just work. YCW educates for global awareness and solidarity.

Jan had the advantage of standing in the same faith tradition as her audience. She reminded the students of the absolute centrality of Jesus' message of peace, by elucidating each time the word *peace* is used in the Gospel. She encouraged them by quoting more recent Papal teachings about peace; she referred them to some of our leading Catholic activists for peace such as Daniel Berrigan. She was unequivocal about non-violence being the only response to violence – the only way to build peace. Yet Jan was honest about whether she would be able to live that ideal in the face of violence directed at herself.

After such a sharing from the four speakers the students asked the speakers to explore further the issues each had raised. **Jade Herriman**, from the Management committee for *World Wide Views on Global Warming*, joined the panel to answer questions about the findings of the citizens from the 38

countries around the world who met on the same day as the Sydney participants.

The students' questions were both reflective and insightful. The process allowed our four speakers to unwittingly demonstrate the respect they held for each other and each other's traditions. Not only did the forum give valuable input for their HSC preparation, it more importantly gave them the opportunity to witness four faith-filled people who were each living out their passion for peace and justice in their lives and within their own faith tradition and spirituality.

The teachers and students were an ideal audience and the students were a credit to both their schools and their families. They were proof positive that the negative media images of our youth are far from accurate.

Our host for this event was Ms Marie Andrews, Member for Gosford. WATAC thanks Marie most sincerely for allowing us to use Theatre of NSW Parliament House as her guests. Marie has been most supportive of WATAC for a number of years, hosting both this event and our annual luncheons, and we are most grateful for her support.

We concluded the forum with the words of Archbishop Oscar Romero:

We accomplish in our lifetime  
only a tiny fraction of  
the magnificent enterprise  
that is God's work.

We cannot do everything,  
and there is a sense of  
liberation in realising that.  
This enables us to do something,  
and to do it very well.  
It may be incomplete,  
but it is a beginning,  
a step along the way,  
an opportunity for the  
Lord's grace to enter  
and do the rest.

We may never see  
the end results,  
but that is the difference  
between the master builder  
and the worker.

We are workers,  
not master builders,  
ministers, not messiahs.  
We are prophets  
of a future not our own.

# Woman, Religion and Peace

## WHY AM I HERE?

Matthew van Gestal

A couple of months ago I received a phone call to inform me that my name had been randomly selected with 1,200 others as suggested participants to attend a National Forum about Global Warming and its problems.

I raised a few objections because I was not an academic and I felt I wasn't informed enough or a good speaker or even a quick thinker and I wondered, what could I contribute? But I was assured that I was exactly the kind of person they were looking for. They wanted people from every walk of life to be a true representation of the population of this country, Australia.

After a few weeks I received an official letter saying that those 1,200 people had been whittled down to 100 and my name was still there on the list. Excited, but also very humbled, I felt it was an enormous privilege to be selected as a participant.

The consultation was part of the World Wide Views on Global Warming. It was held in 38 countries throughout the world on the same days. It was an initiative of the Danish Board of Technology and The Danish Cultural Institute. The University of Technology Sydney is the Australian WWViews partner here and they conducted the Forum for Australia.

The meeting was organised so that we sat at 18 tables in groups of 6. The groups were evenly divided with three men and three women at each one plus an independent facilitator. There were also experts in various fields who were continually roaming and available to answer any questions, but they could not give any advice or their personal views.

In my group there was a young indigenous woman from The Kimberley, a woman from Victoria and one from Sydney, a male from South Australia, a male from the Central Coast and me from the Sutherland Shire. We were a typical group, from very different walks of life, but we soon established a close bond. And we are still keeping in touch via the email. On the weekend our opinions were often divided, but we listened to each other, and on occasions we agreed to disagree. And it was surprising to me that the women seemed to be more aware of the outcomes of the Global Warming and more committed and more positive to do something about it.

It was all a most democratic event and we spent a day and a half deliberating crucial climate issues, then cast votes and provided a group answer to a set of pre-set questions and recommendations to our political leaders for them to take to the United Nations Cop15 conference in Copenhagen next month.

We were very aware that the decisions we made at this conference would influence the everyday lives of all people across the world. And we were becoming more and more aware on how urgent it is getting and how Governments **should** act.

The results of the Australian group turned out to be an overwhelming majority of **92%** who think that a global climate deal is urgent and should be made at COP15 and, if this is accepted, **94%** believe Australian politicians should give high priority to joining, and **74%** say the price of fossil fuel should be increased to deal with the climate change. We also wanted a legally binding global agreement.

Our top recommendation was that "Australia should **act now** to limit warming below **2° Celsius**, again through a legally a binding global agreement; develop new technology in an ethical and accountable process, and that the need for leadership in education and technical advances, is paramount".

A full 99% said there should be reduction targets for all Annex 1 countries for the short term. And 89% said they should be 25% or higher than the two degrees, significantly more than what many countries have put on the table. Two-thirds believe countries that do not meet their commitments under a new climate deal be subjected to "severe" or "significant" punishment.

These same questions were deliberated on by over 4,000 other citizens from around the world, using the same process and the same information material, and the results have been almost identical. These results are available on the net.

I was very heartened by President Obama's presence at the United Nations recently. In his speech at the summit on Climate Change, not only did he reposition the United States as an equal partner in global affairs, but also, by emphasizing on climate change and nuclear disarmament, he sent a signal that both issues will no longer wander

in the U.S. diplomatic wilderness. He said, "We are determined to act and we will meet our responsibility for future generations".

More and more people are speaking out about the need for urgent action. This is great. If only we could get our leaders and all the world leaders to agree. These decisions should be much more bipartisan, because they are too important to be politicised.

So where does religion come into this? And does it take a position on it? The answer is "YES"

Two days before the United Nations meeting at which president Obama spoke the U.S. Cardinal Keith O'Brien said at a Mass in New York:

We are speaking to ensure that the voices of the poorest and most marginalized people are heard. There is no longer a debate that global warming is hurting people. Even the UN estimates that 262 million people between 2000 and 2002 were affected by disasters caused by global warming.

Fr. Jim Hug, a Jesuit priest and President of the Centre of Concern, sees a clear practical connection between climate change and nuclear disarmament, and he says:

As climate change advances, it is going to displace more and more people, which will create more conflict, also water will become a huge source of conflict, and the more conflict the greater the nuclear threat. So Climate Change is also an essential element of "PEACE".

I have been a pacifist all my life and as a child I lived through World War II in my native country Holland which was overrun and occupied by the enemy, so his words really made me more aware of the urgency of this whole issue.

As a child I was brought up in a very Catholic part of Holland. We went to Catholic schools and to mass regularly, and did all the right Catholic things, and our family was highly thought of in church circles. I have always seen God in arts: music could and still does bring me to tears and a beautiful painting can leave me in awe, and I am sure that the composers and the artists had also been inspired to be able to produce such wonderful masterpieces.

In his most recent encyclical *Caritas in Veritate*, Pope Benedict wrote some very relevant words about today's topic, under the heading of "The Challenge of the Environment in Today's World," and I quote:

The fact that some states, power groups and companies hoard non-renewable energy resources, represents a grave obstacle to development in poor countries. Technologically advanced societies can and must lower their energy consumption .... We must encourage research into alternative forms of energy and we must recognize our grave duty - to hand the earth onto our future generations in such a condition that they too can worthily inhabit it and continue to cultivate it. This means being committed to making joint decisions after pondering responsibly, the road to be taken ...

You may have read in the papers or seen on the TV news coverage on the day of 24<sup>th</sup> October, rallies were held around the world, co-ordinated by an organisation called 350.org. A growing consensus among climate scientists is that the most carbon we can have in the atmosphere without causing climate havoc is 350 parts per million. Hence the name 350.org. But at this moment it is already 390 PPM and growing by 50 ppm per year without any action from us.

Archbishop Tutu wrote passionately about 350.org. And in part said:

People in almost all the nations of the earth are involved - it is the same kind of coalition that helped make the word *Apartheid* known around the world.

It makes me think!

I truly believe, and this has been for a long time, that nature, the earth, the environment around me and the universe we all live in, are gifts from our God and I question the morality of it all, as I watch the escalation in destruction by rising sea levels with floods, fires and violent weather patterns.

And I keep on asking myself that question: Why am I here? Why am I doing this? What will I tell my grandchildren when they ask me...

**"What did you do about it?"**



# Phan spells out goals of interfaith dialogue

Robert Mickens

Fr Peter Phan, a noted US theologian whose writings have long been under Vatican scrutiny, told a conference in Rome last weekend that the topic of religious pluralism was “one of the most pressing issues” in the Catholic Church today – and one of the most dangerous.

“It is a controversial theme and one that in the current ecclesiastical climate is broached at ones peril,” the Georgetown University professor said. He was the keynote speaker at a 28-31 August meeting of more than 40 Dominican priests, sisters and laity involved in inter-religious dialogue around the world.

“To judge from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith’s [CDF] declaration *Dominus Iesus* [2000] and the investigations of the works of theologians Jacques Dupuis, Roger Haight, Jon Sobrino and a host of lesser lights, there is no doubt that what is called the theology of religious pluralism constitutes the neuralgic point of contemporary Catholic theology,” he told the assembly.

*Dominus Iesus* – subtitled, “On the unicity and salvific universality of Jesus Christ and the Church” – sought to reaffirm the Church’s teaching on the nature of the Church and salvation and to refute errors.

The Vietnamese-born Fr Phan, who emigrated to the United States in 1975 and is a priest of the Diocese of Dallas, has questioned some of the theological assertions in that declaration, leading the Vatican to investigate his teaching.

In 2005 the CDF began reviewing a book he published a year earlier entitled *Being Religious Interreligiously*. However, it was the US bishops’ conference’s Committee on Doctrine that eventually issued a 15-page critique of the work in December 2007. It said the book contained “pervading ambiguities and equivocations that could easily confuse or

mislead” Catholics and claimed that it did “not express adequately and accurately the Church’s teaching” (*The Tablet*, 15 December 2007). Immediately following that warning, the CDF issued a “Doctrinal Note on Some Aspects of Evangelisation”, which a Vatican official told *The Tablet* was “definitely related” to the US investigation into Fr Phan’s book (*The Tablet*, 22 December 2007).

The Dominicans invited the theologian to speak at their annual gathering on interfaith dialogue called *Journées Romaines Dominicaines* (JRD). The topic of the meeting was “Universal Salvation: Challenged by religious identity”. Fr Phan elaborated on the ideas that are found in his writings and raised more questions than he answered.

“Is interfaith dialogue intended (and organised, sometime surreptitiously) as a means for conversion?” he asked. “The answer, to my mind, must be no. Its only goal is to learn about other religions as well as to inform others about one’s religion as much and as accurately as possible, and to be enriched, intellectually and spiritually, by such an exchange of life, action, theology and prayer,” he said. “Peter Phan was invited to speak so we could discuss his ideas, not to adopt them or follow them, but to discuss them,” said Fr Márcio Couto, director of Intellectual Life for the Dominican Order and one of the organisers of the JRD.

“We thought he would broaden the horizons for us,” said Fr Prakash Lohale, the order’s Pakistani director of Apostolic Life. “We wanted the opportunity to debate with him to understand him better, and to give him a forum here with people already involved in dialogue.” Sr Anna Morrone OP said: “We were impressed by the way he treated everyone with great respect and friendship.”

In January 2008 the Dominicans at the Aquinas Institute of Theology in St Louis cancelled an annual lecture that was to feature Fr Phan after the local archbishop, Raymond Burke, objected to it. Archbishop Burke, now head of Apostolic Signatura and residing in Rome, said Fr Phan was “not a reliable teacher of the Catholic faith”.

*The Tablet* - 5 September 2009

## Bertone denies any ‘reform of the reform’

THE VATICAN Secretary of State, Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone SDB, has defended Pope Benedict XVI against insinuations that he is trying to roll back reforms ushered in with the Second Vatican Council, writes Robert Mickens.

In an interview in the 28 August issue of the Vatican newspaper, *L’Osservatore Romano*, the cardinal said “ruminations and whispers about presumed documents of reversal are pure invention.” On the contrary, there were a number of aspects of Vatican II that the Pope had “constantly promoted with intelligence and profundity of thought”. He claimed they had led to “developments never before realised”, especially in better relations with the Orthodox, Jews and Muslims.

*The Tablet* - 5 September 2009

# Louise Akers: Silenced or louder than ever?

Joan Chittister

**H**istory is a dangerous thing. Somebody ought to be reviewing some of it carefully now – for the sake of the church, if nothing else. There may be a lesson to be learned here.

In Richard Attenborough's film, *Gandhi*, one scene of Gandhi's life and the revolt of Indian nationalists against British control stands out above all others. Intent on defying new British taxes on Indian salt, Gandhi leads a march to the sea to collect the salt water that would enable poor Indians to make their own.

It was an ugly sight.

As they march in silent ranks to the shore, the Indians are met head on by hundreds and hundreds of British colonial police – many of them Indians themselves – clubs and muskets in hand, who systematically beat every rank of unarmed demonstrators to the ground. But the ranks never stop coming. One after another they come, row after row of them. Beating after beating after beating, they walk over one another in ordered formation into the butt of British rifles, certain of their personhood, sure of their cause, convinced of its right.

The salt boycott – the boycott that began with thousands of defenseless peasants risking beatings, imprisonment and even death – led, in the end, to the Indian declaration of independence from England.

Gandhi was clear about the purpose of non-violent resistance. It would expose the injustice of the oppressor and claim the conscience of the world.

The lesson is a sobering one: Suppression does not end revolution; it breeds it. It solves nothing.

The kind of animal resistance the world saw directed at the voiceless in Gandhi's Salt March is, in most of the world, over. At the same time, women – and those who support the pursuits of women for recognition as full human beings – are getting a taste of the same kind of opposition. It is equally implacable. It is at least as powerful. It is universal. Fundamentalist extremists of all ilk and their interpretations of religion everywhere claim one way or another that God is sexist. With orthodoxy as an excuse and God as an argument, women are denied Torah study and rabbinates in

some strains of Judaism. They are denied public access and made captives of their husbands in other places in the name of the Koran. They are condemned as lesser beings on behalf of the Hindu Vedas. They are forbidden ordination – with everything that implies, including karma and financial support – in defense of Buddhism. They are made consumers of the faith rather than ministers of the faith in various Christian denominations.

Most of all they, too, are silenced so that the rest of the community can not hear their concerns, examine their suppositions.

But rather than discouraging those – men as well as women – who argue for the rights and presence of women everywhere, suppression is simply alerting people everywhere that there is no possible justification, on the grounds of femaleness alone, for the elimination of women from public service, from public participation, from adult agency, from the holy halls of religious discipleship.

And that's where concern for Cincinnati Sister of Charity Louise Akers comes in. But that's where concern for the church comes in, too.

Sr. Louise has been dismissed by Archbishop Daniel Pilarczyk from all diocesan positions and/or conferences on Catholic soil in the archdiocese of Cincinnati due to her support for the ordination of women in the Roman Catholic church. She was willing, she says, to leave the advisory board of the Women's Ordination Conference and to have her picture removed from their Website. She was not willing to be forced to retract her support for the continued study of the theological foundation upon which the exclusion of women from Catholic ordination is based – a clearly intellectually honest position.

As a result, Sr. Louise, recently recognized by the city of Cincinnati as one of its outstanding civic leaders and, ironically, coordinator of Cincinnati's Intercommunity Justice and Peace Center, will be denied access to the idea development arena of the Catholic community where she is obviously needed most.

Comments that followed the news story detailing the dismissal lamented "the loss of a voice like this" to the church.

But they're wrong. The church faces precisely the opposite problem, whether it realizes it or not.

Voices like this, voices that cry for justice, voices that point out the lacunae in the thinking of the theological community and are punished for their continuing pursuit of truth are not "lost." On the contrary. Those voices ring loud and clear around the globe for all the world to hear. One after another after another. And little by little, one silenced voice recruits ten, a hundred, a thousand, a society worth of others. All of them talking. All of them refusing to be silent.

If you think not, think Martin Luther or Ulrich Zwingli or John Calvin or Mary Ward or Mary MacKillop or John Cardinal Henry Newman or Teilhard de Chardin or Hans Kung. Think of any number of others without whom we would still be selling relics or teaching merit theology or refusing to allow women religious on the streets or rejecting the concept of the *sensus fidelium* or refusing to attend the weddings of our children in Protestant churches or disdaining to deny science, scientists, the movement of the sun and evolution.

The continued suppression of thinkers who call for the discussion and study of the role of women in church and society is not suppressing anything. In fact, more and more men and women are

beginning to speak out about it. Which is where Sr. Louise and Archbishop Pilarczyk come in: Like the English, he has the power of the past on his side; like Gandhi, she has the power of the present and the promise of the future on hers.

The truth is that suppression of thought is more dangerous to the church than any sin the church has ever committed. It has not only driven people away, it has stunted its own development, diminished its credibility.

From where I stand, it may be time to forget power and theology, magisteriums and inquisitions for a while. Maybe we should just all sit down and, if history is not convincing enough, read the New Testament. Read the parables, in fact, in which Jesus talks about how to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad, true and false. Matthew 13:30 may give us a clue. It reads, "Let both wheat and weeds grow up together till the harvest. At that time, I will tell the harvesters 'First, collect the weeds and tie them together to be burned. Then, gather the wheat and bring it to my barn.' "

Point: Let them all talk until, as a church searching under the impulse of the Spirit, we hear clearly where truth lies for us.

Not a bad idea, perhaps, for times such as these.

*Benedictine Sr. Joan Chittister is a best-selling author and international lecturer on topics of justice, peace, human rights, women's issues, and contemporary spirituality in the church and in society.*

DON'T MISS THIS

## *Home and Away*

John Marsden and Matt Ottley

**T**his book would make a wonderful Christmas gift for yourself, your friends – be they young or older – (grandchildren from 10 yrs to 50+ yrs) and even those who don't agree with you that refugees are people too. The artwork is absolutely breathtaking and will touch your soul and heart.

*'Everyone wants a place of safety, a place to share with the people they love, a place to relax. A home.*

*Right now, more than a billion people don't have a home – that's one in seven of the world's population.*

*There are only two places you can be in life: home or away.'*

John Marsden

This is a children's book that every adult needs to read.

# And Also With You

Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart ...  
Try to love the questions themselves ...  
Do not seek the answers, which cannot be given  
Because you would not be able to live them  
And the point is  
To live everything,  
Live the questions now  
Perhaps you will then gradually,  
Without noticing it  
Live along some distant day  
Into the answers.

*Rainer Maria Rilke*

**T**hank you to all of you who wrote in response to Paul Collins booklet *And Also With You*. All your responses were so passionate, honest and intelligent – very inspiring and energising. I guess we are all walking the path Rainer Maria Rilke writes of in his poem about being ‘patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart’. When it comes to our institutional Church, there are many questions but the answers are few, and this situation seems to be increasing week by week.

The action we have undertaken so far is to put as many responses as possible on four double-sided pages (copies included with this newsletter for your information) and then we sent them to most of our Bishops with a covering letter. Our aim was to get that material to them in time for the Australian Bishops Conference meeting in November/December. Not all your responses were included as we didn’t want the document to be too long and because your thoughtful replies are still coming in, so time was also a factor.

The next step we are taking is to send you two copies of this same document so that you can use it to raise awareness among your friends and within your parish. If you have a Parish Council maybe you could organise to discuss Paul Collins article and these responses with the members. If you were able to talk with your priest it might be helpful for him to hear the voice of some committed, passionate Catholics. I am sure some priests would feel supported by the honest reflections these pages contain. On the other hand, of course, the more conservative may not agree, which brings us back to Rilke’s poem, we have to ‘live the questions now’. It takes courage, patience and a big heart full of hope so that we can ‘live along some distant day into the answers’.

At our recent WATAC Inc meeting we also decided that we would purchase more copies of Paul Collins booklet so that the information could be more widely distributed. We also thought that early next year will be the best time to animate further action. Let’s all take time now to celebrate Christmas!

Again, thank you to everyone who took the time to write; every response is valued and will contribute to WATAC’s ongoing action on this issue. Paul Collins also deserves our deepest gratitude for the excellence of his article and his commitment to Vatican II’s vision for our Church.

*Bernice Moore*

# If We Said, 'Wait'?

The case for a grass-roots review  
of the new Roman Missal

Michael G. Ryan

It is now 45 years since the Second Vatican Council promulgated the groundbreaking and liberating document on the sacred liturgy, *Sacrosanctum Concilium*. As an eager and enthusiastic North American College seminarian at the time, I was in St. Peter's Square on the December day in 1963 when Pope Paul VI, with the world's bishops, presented that great Magna Carta to the church. The conciliar document transcended ecclesiastical politics. It was not just the pet project of a party but the overwhelming consensus of the bishops of the world. Its adoption passed overwhelmingly: 2,147 to 4.

Not in my wildest dreams would it have occurred to me then that I would live to witness what seems more and more like the systematic dismantling of the great vision of the council's decree. But I have. We Catholics have.

For evidence, one need look no further than recent instructions from the Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments that have raised rubricism to an art form, or the endorsement, even encouragement, of the so-called Tridentine Mass. It has become painfully clear that the liturgy, the prayer of the people, is being used as a tool – some would even say as a weapon – to advance specific agendas. And now on the horizon are the new translations of the Roman Missal that will soon reach the final stages of approval by the Holy See. Before long the priests of this country will be told to take the new translations to their people by means of a carefully orchestrated education program that will attempt to put a good face on something that clearly does not deserve it.

The veterans who enthusiastically devoted their best creative energies as young priests to selling the reforms of the council to parishioners back in the 1960s will be asked to do the same with regard to the new translations. Yet we will be hard put to do so. Some colleagues in ministry may actually relish the opportunity, but not those of us who were captivated by the great vision of Vatican II, who knew firsthand the Tridentine Mass and loved it for what it was, but welcomed its passing because of what full, conscious and active participation would mean for our people. We can see the present moment only as one more assault on the council and, sadly, one more blow to episcopal collegiality. It was, after all, the council that gave to conferences of bishops the authority to produce their own translations (S.C., Nos. 36, 40), to be approved, it is true, by the Holy See but not, presumably, to be initiated, nipped and controlled

by it. Further, the council also wisely made provision for times of experimentation and evaluation (S.C., No. 40) – something that has been noticeably missing in the present case.

This leads me to pose a question to my brother priests: What if we were to awaken to the fact that these texts are neither pastoral nor ready for our parishes? *What if we just said, "Wait"?*

## PRAYER AND GOOD SENSE

I know it might smack of insubordination to talk this way, but it could also be a show of loyalty and plain good sense – loyalty not to any ideological agenda but to our people, whose prayer the new translations purport to improve, and good sense to anyone who stops to think about what is at stake here.

What is at stake, it seems to me, is nothing less than the church's credibility. It is true that the church could gain some credibility by giving us more beautiful translations, but clumsy is not beautiful, and precious is not prayerful. During a recent dinner conversation with friends, the issue of the new translations came up. Two at the table were keenly – and quite angrily – aware of the impending changes; two were not. When the uninformed heard a few examples ("and with your spirit"; "consubstantial with the Father"; "incarnate of the Virgin Mary"; "oblation of our service"; "send down your Spirit like the dewfall"; "He took the precious chalice"; "serene and kindly countenance," for starters), the reaction was somewhere between disbelief and indignation.

One person ventured the opinion that with all that the church has on its plate today – global challenges with regard to justice, peace and the environment; nagging scandals; a severe priest shortage; the growing disenchantment of many women; seriously lagging church attendance – it seems almost ludicrous to push ahead with an agenda that will seem at best trivial and at worst hopelessly out-of-touch.

The reaction of my friends should surprise no one who has had a chance to review the new translations. Some of them have merit, but far too many do not. Recently the Archdiocese of Seattle sponsored a seminar on the new translations for lay leaders and clergy. Both the priest who led the seminar (an accomplished liturgical theologian) and the participants gathered there in good faith. When passages from the proposed new translation were soberly read aloud by the presenter (I remember especially the phrase from the first eucharistic prayer that currently reads "Joseph, her husband," but which in the new translation becomes "Joseph, spouse of the same virgin"), there was audible laughter in the room. I found myself thinking that the idea of this happening during the sacred liturgy is no laughing matter but something that should make us all tremble.

There's more: the chilling reception the people of the dioceses of South Africa have given the new translations. In a rare oversight, the bishops of that

country misread the instructions from Rome and, after a careful program of catechesis in the parishes, introduced the new translations to their people some months ago. The translations were met almost uniformly with opposition bordering on outrage.

It is not my purpose here to discuss in detail the flawed principles of translation behind this effort or the weak, inconsistent translations that have resulted. Others have already ably done that. Nor do I want to belabor the fact that those who prepared the translations seem to be far better versed in Latin than in English. No, my concern is for the step we now face: the prospect of implementing the new translations. This brings me back to my question: What if we just said, "Wait"?

What if we, the parish priests of this country who will be charged with the implementation, were to find our voice and tell our bishops that we want to help them avert an almost certain fiasco? What if we told them that we think it unwise to implement these changes until our people have been consulted in an adult manner that truly honors their intelligence and their baptismal birthright? What if we just said, "Wait, not until our people are ready for the new translations, but until the translations are ready for our people"?

#### HEEDING OUR PASTORAL INSTINCTS

The bishops have done their best, but up to now they have not succeeded. Some of them, led by the courageous and outspoken former chairman of the Bishops' Committee on the Liturgy, Bishop Donald Trautman of Erie, Pa., tried mightily to stop the new translation train but to no avail. The bishops' conference, marginalized and battle-weary, allowed itself slowly but steadily to be worn down. After a while the will to fight was simply not there. Acquiescence took over to the point that tiny gains (a word here, a comma there) were regarded as major victories. Without ever wanting to, the bishops abandoned their best pastoral instincts and in so doing gave up on the best interests of their people.

So the question arises: Are we priests going to give up, too? Are we, too, going to acquiesce? We do, of course, owe our bishops the obedience and respect that we pledged to them on the day of our ordination, but does obedience mean complicity with something we perceive to be wrong – or, at best, wrongheaded? Does obedience mean going against our best pastoral instincts in order to promote something that we believe will, in the end, actually bring discredit to the church and further disillusionment to the people? I do not think so. And does respect involve paying lip service to something to which our more instinctive reaction is to call it foolhardy? Again, I don't think so. I offer the following modest proposals:

What if pastors, pastoral councils, liturgical commissions and presbyteral councils were to appeal to their bishops for a time of reflection and consultation on the translations and on the process whereby they will be given to the people? It is ironic, to say the least, that we spend hours of consultation when planning to renovate a church building or parish hall, but little or none when "renovating" the very language of the liturgy.

What if, before implementing the new translations, we do some "market testing"? What if each region of bishops were to designate certain places where the new translations would receive a trial run: urban parishes and rural parishes, affluent parishes and poor parishes, large, multicultural parishes and small parishes, religious communities and college campuses? What if for the space of one full liturgical year the new translations were used in these designated communities, with carefully planned catechesis and thorough, honest evaluation? Wouldn't such an experiment yield valuable information for both the translators and the bishops? And wouldn't such an experiment make it much easier to implement the translations when they are ready?

In short, what if we were to trust our best instincts and defend our people from this ill-conceived disruption of their prayer life? What if collegiality, dialogue and a realistic awareness of the pastoral needs of our people were to be introduced at this late stage of the game? Is it not possible that we might help the church we love avert a debacle or even disaster? And is it not possible that the voices in the church that have decided that Latinity is more important than lucidity might end up listening to the people and re-evaluating their position, and that lengthy, ungainly, awkward sentences could be trimmed, giving way to noble, even poetic translations of beautiful old texts that would be truly worthy of our greatest prayer, worthy of our language and worthy of the holy people of God whose prayer this is? (If you think the above sentence is unwieldy, wait till you see some of the new Missal translations. They might be readable, but border on the unspeakable!)

"What If We Just Said No?" was my working title for this article. "What If We Just Said, 'Wait'?" seems preferable. Dialogue is better than diatribe, as the Second Vatican Council amply demonstrated. So let the dialogue begin. Why not let the priests who are on the front lines and the laypeople who pay the bills (including the salaries of priests and bishops) have some say in how they are to pray? If you think the idea has merit, I invite you to log on to the Web site [www.whatifwejustsaidwait.org](http://www.whatifwejustsaidwait.org) and make your voice heard. If our bishops know the depth of our concern, perhaps they will not feel so alone.

Rev. Michael G. Ryan has been pastor of St. James Cathedral in Seattle since 1988 and serves on the board of the national Cathedral Ministry Conference. This article appeared in *America Magazine*, December 14 2009, and is reprinted with permission. There is a form on his website to say what you think and to add your name to the list of protesters.

# Bishops approve Missal translations

Michael Sean Winters

In Baltimore

**A** REARGUARD action by a bishop to overturn the approval of the new Missal translation failed this week in Baltimore. The bishops were gathered for their annual plenary meeting, where they approved a letter on marriage restating the Church's opposition to cohabitation by unmarried couples, active homosexuality and birth control. Behind the scenes the bishops were focused on the healthcare reform legislation being debated in Congress.

The new translations of the Roman Missal have been on the bishops' agenda for years. This year the final documents requiring their approval including translations of the Proper of Saints and the Commons (prayers for celebrating other saints listed in the Roman Martyrology not included in the universal liturgical calendar) passed with little controversy.

But, in an effort to revisit previously approved texts, Bishop Donald Trautman of Erie, Pennsylvania, urged the bishops to vote down one of the translations in order to begin new discussions with the Congregation for Divine Worship in Rome about the entire project. A negative vote on any one text would require a new round of negotiations with Rome. Bishop Trautman, who formerly chaired the bishops' committee on liturgy, has argued that many of the new texts display bad English grammar and complained that the new missal "violates English syntax in the most egregious way".

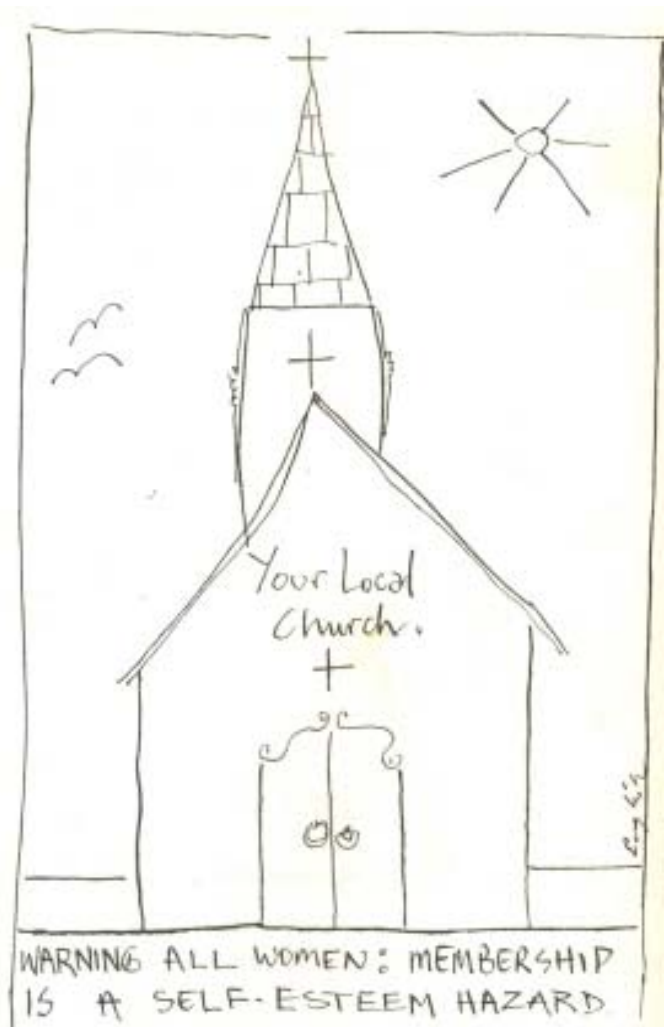
Despite Bishop Trautman's plea, the bishops accepted several amendments and, in a series of votes, they approved the final texts.

Although not on the agenda, many of the discussions among the bishops focused on Congress' efforts to craft health-care reform legislation. The bishops were pleased with the outcome of the debate in the US House of Representatives, which on 7 November passed a bill that included a pro-life Stupak Amendment barring federal funding of abortion. The bishops' conference president, Cardinal Francis George, said in a statement issued at the start of the meeting that "the US House of Representatives advanced major legislation to provide adequate and

affordable health care to all. The Catholic Bishops of the United States have long advocated that adequate health care be made available to everyone."

It remains unclear if the pro-life amendment will survive the debate in the US Senate, which began deliberations this week. Congresswoman Diana DeGette, co-chairman of the pro-choice caucus in the House, spearheaded an effort to roll back the pro-life language in the White House bill.

*The Tablet 21<sup>st</sup> November 2009*



# Women religious not complying with Vatican study

Thomas C. Fox

The vast majority of U.S. women religious are not complying with a Vatican request to answer questions in a document of inquiry that is part of a three-year study of the congregations. Leaders of congregations, instead, are leaving questions unanswered or sending in letters or copies of their communities' constitutions.

"There's been almost universal resistance," said one woman religious familiar with the responses compiled by the congregation leaders. "We are saying 'enough!' In my 40 years in religious life I have never seen such unanimity."

The deadline for the questionnaires to be filled out and returned to the Vatican-appointed apostolic visitor, superior general of the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Mother Mary Clare Millea, was Nov. 20. On that day, according to an informed source, congregation leaders across the nation sent Millea letters and, in many cases, only partial answers to the questionnaire. Many women, instead of filling out the forms, replied by sending in copies of their Vatican-approved orders' religious constitutions. A religious order's constitution states its rationale, purpose and mission.

The Vatican initiated the study in January, saying its purpose is to determine the quality of life in religious communities, given the decline in vocations in recent decades. From the outset, the women have complained they were never consulted before Vatican officials announced the investigation and there is no transparency in the process. Some have called the effort demeaning and intrusive.

The decisions by congregation leaders not to comply follow nearly two months of intensive discussions both inside and across religious congregations. They follow consultations with civil and canon lawyers, and come in the wake of what some women religious see as widespread support by laity for their church missions.

With about half of the responses from the nation's 59,000 women religious accounted for, only about one percent answered, as directed, most or all of the questions contained in the study's working paper, officially called an *Instrumentum Laboris*, according to one informed source.

By contrast, according to the source, congregations representing, by far, the greater majority of women religious decided not to comply and answered only a few, or none, of the questions. Many of the 340 U.S.

apostolic congregation heads instead sent letters to Millea stating that what they were sending was what the Vatican was looking for.

"Cover letters [to Millea] have been respectful and kind," one woman, familiar with the responses, told NCR. "Many of the letters have essentially said that what we have to say about ourselves has already been said in our religious constitutions."

The Vatican questionnaire is divided into three parts. **Part A** attempts to collect quantifiable information about such things as membership, numbers, living arrangements, health, and retirement conditions. **Part B** and **Part C** aim to gather detailed information about community governance practices, vocation efforts, spiritual and liturgical practices, ministry and finances.

Earlier in the month, apparently after many complaints from women religious, the Vatican withdrew several questions from Part C, involving the individual ages of the women, assets belonging to the congregations, and recent financial statements.

NCR contacted more than a dozen women religious familiar with the responses. Almost no one would allow her name to be used, citing fear of reprisal against their congregations and the desire to have the apostolic visitor receive their letters before word of the actions became public.

While declining to be identified, one woman said: "What I can say quite clearly is that every leader that I know is trying to answer the survey with integrity. How that integrity works out in each case is up to the wisdom of each leader and her council."

"This was a grassroots response," said another woman religious. "It was not organized. It came out of a widespread sense that the Vatican action was an unjust affront to women religious."

Explaining the attitude in her community, St. Joseph Sr. Margaret Gregg said, "I feel the response was a thoughtful, respectful response to a very puzzling situation. The purpose of this investigation is unclear to me, given the level of the questions. I have always been proud of our community and the many women who serve God's people. The first sentence of our letter [to Millea] says it all, 'As apostolic women religious, we are faithful to the call of the Gospel and to our respective charisms.'"

The Vatican study is being carried out by the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. The action was initiated by the congregation's prefect, Cardinal Franc Rodé, who received authority for it from Pope Benedict late last year. It is being conducted under the direction of Millea, a Connecticut native, who heads the Apostles of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, an international religious institute headquartered in Rome.

Phase one of the Vatican study involved interviews Millea had with congregation heads. Millea, a number

of women religious leaders have said, has always been professional and cordial in carrying out her work as apostolic visitor. Phase two of the study involves the answering of the questionnaires. Phase three of the study calls for individual on site visits by teams of religious, appointed by Millea, to yet to be announced congregations. These are set to begin next spring.

Phase four calls for Millea to comb the information and make recommendations to the Vatican for further action.

The Vatican has placed the cost of the study at \$1.1 million and has asked U.S. bishops to help raise the money.

Several women religious said that, in discerning their responses to the questionnaire which they felt were intrusive, there emerged a new sense of identity and resolve. One said that for years women religious have focused on the needs of others. This time they had to focus on themselves.

She said women religious have been virtually unanimous in spirit that they have been living out their missions, as directed by the gospels and by the Second Vatican Council, which called upon religious communities to go out in the world to work among the poor and to build more just and peaceful structures.

She explained that in the process church prelates lost the control over women religious congregations they once had. She said many women religious believe the investigation is part of an effort to regain that control.

"Vatican II took us out of the ghettos and into ecology, feminism and justice in the world," she said. "The Vatican still has a difficult time accepting that."

Some of the women interviewed by NCR cite an irony involved in the investigation. One said that it is "unlikely the Vatican wanted us to come out of this being more confident of our identity as self-defining religious agents, but that is exactly what has happened."

Another said: "At first, many women were asking, 'How do we respond? Then we were asking, 'How do we respond faithfully in keeping with our identity?' And soon we were asking, 'What is that identity?' "

Still another said that at first when confronted with the questionnaire, many women religious congregation heads felt isolated. But after discussions within their communities and after regional meetings with other women religious and after consultations with their canon lawyers, they overcame the initial sense of isolation and grew in common resolve.

Several women said canon lawyers told the women they were not required to answer all the questions. Religious, unlike bishops, priests and deacons, who

make up the clergy, are not officially part of the church's hierarchical structure. According to this reasoning, women religious are responsible to their congregation leadership and to their constitutions.

NCR contacted several canon lawyers consulted by women religious communities. These canon lawyers declined to be interviewed for this story.

All along, said one woman religious, the challenge has been to respond to the Vatican in a way that breaks a cycle of violence. She said that the women religious communities have attempted to respond by using a language "devoid of the violence" they found in the Vatican questionnaire and within the wider study. She characterized the congregation responses as "creative and affirming," and part of an effort to set a positive example in "nonviolent resistance."

"On the one hand we didn't want to roll over and play dead," she said. "So the question was, 'How do you step outside a violent framework and do something new?' That was the challenge that emerged." One congregation, she said, cited a U.S. bishops' statement concerning domestic abuse in its response letter to Millea. "The point is, there have to be more than two choices: Take the abuse and offer it up, or kill the abuser."

Women religious, she said, are asking if there is a "Ghandian or Martin Luther King way" to deal with violence they felt is being done to them.

At issue, according to several women religious, is the role women religious are to play in the world today. As much as any other element in the church, women religious claim Vatican II's documents as a call go out in the world, loved and blessed by God, and to serve within it.

During the pontificates of Pope John Paul II and Benedict XVI the hierarchy, many church observers say, has pulled back from these directives, seeing the world as a more hostile environment. They view the church as a bastion of light and love within this world and want the women religious to work more directly from within church structures.

For example, Rodé told NCR senior correspondent John Allen last month that he believes that Vatican II, while designed to generate a moderate reform, instead triggered "the greatest crisis in church history."

"In the 16th century, during the Reformation, many religious left the church and many convents were closed, but it was geographically limited, more or less to Northern Europe," he said. "In the French Revolution, there was another catastrophe, but it was limited to France. The crisis after the Second Vatican Council, however, was the first truly global crisis."

"We've paid a very steep price due to a secularized, worldly mentality," he said.

*NCR online 24<sup>th</sup> November 2009*

# Giving Saudi women a public presence

Farah Farouque

**H**ana Bubshait says Saudi women will eventually enjoy greater freedoms through patience and consistent work.

‘DON’T stereotype me’, says Hana Bubshait, who has the rare honour of being a Saudi Arabian woman who occupies the public space.

Yesterday this quietly spoken woman, who under Saudi law had to get her father’s permission to travel alone, went to the podium at the Parliament of World Religions at the Melbourne Convention Centre and appealed to her audience to better understand her struggles.

She is not an activist in the traditional sense, but she is part of a movement in Saudi Arabia that is restless for change. It is not change as her Western audience would understand it, however.

Saudi women’s quest for better legal rights, Ms Bubshait says in her frank way, comes down to taking ‘baby steps’.

‘Right now, I am able to work and am able to get whatever education I want. But I can’t buy a house with my money unless I take a father, a brother or a husband with me to court. The court won’t acknowledge me as a person alone.’

Ms Bubshait is troubled by the unfairness of it all but says this has nothing to do with her Islamic faith. ‘This is not religious, this is cultural.’

Indeed, she says the Saudi dilemma is in part that many of her female compatriots don’t espouse parity with men. ‘Some women were raised this traditional way, and this is what they believe is right. This is what the mentality has been for 100, 200 years.’

One of the issues – for overseas media, at least – has been Saudi women not being allowed to drive a vehicle. But Ms Bubshait, who works as a policy analyst for the Aramcopetroleum company, notes that when a rumour went around that the women would be encouraged to drive, there was a societal backlash.

‘Women themselves were saying, “We don’t want to drive, stop talking about it”.’

But there are bigger issues than driving that face Saudi women, Ms Bubshait says. She is certain there will be change, but only at its own tempo. ‘It is going to change; it just takes patience and consistent work.’

Interview given at Parliament of the World’s Religions  
Melbourne, 3-9 December, 2009



*Photo: Rebecca Hallas*

## Dublin faces shortage of priests

THE ARCHBISHOP of Dublin has warned his diocese to prepare to share facilities and get used to fewer Masses as the priest shortage bites, writes Paul Keenan.

Archbishop Diarmuid Martin stopped short of mentioning the amalgamation of parishes, but told clergy "difficult readjustments would be needed". There were now just two priests under the age of 35 while 46 were over the age of 80, he said, and the dwindling numbers meant the 199 parishes that make up the diocese would soon be at minimum capacity of one priest each.

Celebrating the feast day of Dublin's patron, St Laurence O'Toole, last weekend, Dr Martin said the situation would "require very different ways in which priests will have to exercise their ministry. Parishes will have to work more closely with each other and share facilities. The number of Masses will have to be rationalised. Some of these changes will cause pain," he said.

Dr Martin added that recent clerical abuse scandals had played a part in the vocations crisis. "The diocese has to repent for the failings of its own members who betrayed their mission of shepherd," he said.

Dr Martin's warning came in a year which saw 36 men entering the national seminary at Maynooth, the highest number since 1999 but well below figures achieved two decades ago.

Meanwhile, the Archdiocese continues to await the findings of a contentious report into child abuse. Publication has been repeatedly delayed by the Irish High Court over concerns that the report could prejudice the outcome of abuse cases currently being examined.

*The Tablet 21st November 2009*

## Walsh urges open debate on priestly celibacy

A SENIOR Irish bishop has expressed a desire to see priestly celibacy and women's ministry discussed openly in the Catholic Church, writes Paul Keenan.

Speaking at a meeting with the Association of European Journalists in Dublin last weekend, the Bishop of Killaloe, Willie Walsh, said the Church failed to discuss important issues.

Outlining topics for debate, the bishop, who is due to retire in January, said: "Celibacy, the role of women in the Church and their exclusion from full participation in the ministry of the Church - I don't feel I have the answers to these things, but they are things that trouble me."

He also mentioned the treatment of homosexuals and remarried divorcees. "I'd love to see another Pope John XXIII in the Church, with that sort of openness he had in looking at things, re-examining who we are [and] opening up certain topics for discussion, particularly in the area of exclusion."

Meanwhile, on Sunday Fr Sean McKenna, a priest in Londonderry, announced during Mass that he had been involved with a woman and was resigning. Parishioners in Ballymagroarty gave him a standing ovation.

*The Tablet 21st November 2009*

# Stewards of Creation

Keith O'Brien

Not to act on the credible scientific evidence of global warming would be morally reprehensible, argues the Cardinal Archbishop of St Andrews and Edinburgh, who is leading a delegation to the United Nations ahead of the Copenhagen climate change summit

**F**or many years I have witnessed the suffering of people living in abject poverty in developing countries – from India and El Salvador to the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burma. Despite their enormous dignity and fortitude, and despite the good work done by aid agencies to help those in need, their lives remain adversely affected by factors beyond their control – and one of these is climate change.

Most leading climate scientists are convinced that the climate is warming rapidly. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reported in 2007 that 11 out of the previous 12 years were among the warmest years since records began. Further, the UN states that this is being caused by the enormous levels of greenhouse gases emitted, primarily by industrialised countries. They are responsible for 76 per cent of the emissions already in the atmosphere.

The effects of this warming can be devastating. We are already witnessing changes to global weather patterns including unpredictable changes to the seasons, more frequent and severe storms, floods and droughts. In the future we can expect a greater number of increasingly severe natural disasters to sweep across the planet.

While the issue of global warming and its effects influences all our lives, it is the poor, those who have done least to cause the problem, who are already suffering its consequences and will be hit the hardest. Existing levels of poverty, poor infrastructure, the high dependence on rain-fed agriculture and the limited ability of people already living in poverty to protect themselves from extreme weather events, mean that they are so much more vulnerable than those of us in developed nations.

The UN Development Programme estimated that between 2000 and 2004, 262 million people were

affected by climate change-related disasters each year, with 98 per cent of those from developing countries. A report earlier this year from the Global Humanitarian Forum headed by the former Secretary General of the UN, Kofi Annan, stated that 300,000 people were already dying each year from climate-related causes, with a further 300 million affected.

Access to food, clean water and health is already a huge problem that will be increasingly exacerbated by global warming. While the debate on the detailed science of climate change will no doubt continue, not acting on the credible and widely supported scientific evidence we do have would be morally reprehensible given the potential consequences.

Behind the numbers are individuals, people like you and me. In El Salvador, a country I will be visiting again in November, I have heard of people gravely affected by climate change. A farmer named Javier Gomez and his community in Santa Cruz are being affected by more frequent and severe droughts, making it difficult for him to grow food to feed his family. He said: "The climate is changing. The weather here is getting drier every year and the rains are getting less. The weather has changed so significantly that we used to plant maize in May but now we have to plant in June because the rains come later. The rainy season is shorter now."

Vernia Saint Peaux lives in the community of Mombin Crochu among the steep hills in the north-east of Haiti. She told the Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund: "The rains are getting heavier and we are able to grow less and less. I have a small vegetable garden on a steep hillside but in recent years we have been unable to grow crops on some parts of our land because the soil has been washed away by rain. This is a problem for the whole community."

While the Church and its international development organisations make a huge difference to the lives of some of the poorest people in the world, their work alone is not enough. The scale of global poverty and the way it is being exacerbated by climate change requires an urgent global response from governments. The Church has a moral duty to speak out on behalf of the poor to those who have the means and the opportunity to bring about change.

That is why I am leading a delegation of bishops and climate change experts to meet heads of states and other key players for talks at the United Nations in New York next week. We will be representing the largest humanitarian and development alliance in the world, made up of the Catholic aid coalitions Cidse and Caritas. We will be calling on world leaders to show moral leadership and make sure they do not forget their responsibilities to the poor in their discussions ahead of their summit in Copenhagen in December.

During my meetings I will be stating plainly that, because wealthy industrialised nations in the developed world have caused the problem of climate change through their large-scale use of natural resources for economic gain, they have a moral obligation to address the problems their actions have created.

Sadly, the best interests of the poor are often ignored in the political wrangling of countries looking after their own national short-term interests. This has to stop. Industrialised nations must commit themselves to substantial reductions in their greenhouse gas emissions to help address the cause of the problem. I am backing calls by the Cidse/Caritas Climate Justice campaign for wealthy nations to reduce their emissions by at least 40 per cent by 2020 (on 1990 levels) and by 80-95 per cent by 2050.

Developed nations must also contribute to the costs that developing nations incur in mitigating, and adapting to, the effects of climate change and in developing their own low-carbon economies. To achieve this, it is estimated that a further \$150 billion (£90bn) per annum will be needed in addition to existing international aid commitments. This is a large sum.

However, it is not acceptable to deny poor countries the right to a more prosperous future when we ourselves live in relative luxury. Indeed, when compared to the \$680 billion (£410bn) spent on the war in Iraq and \$18 trillion (£11trn) spent globally during the recent economic crisis, it is a small price to pay to ensure millions of people have the hope of a sustainable and prosperous future.

God created the earth and entrusted its care to us. We have seriously neglected this important responsibility. It is now time to restore a more sustainable relationship with our environment, so that all human beings have the opportunity to live in dignity. As Pope Benedict wrote in his recent encyclical letter *Caritas in Veritate* ("Love in Truth"), "the environment is God's gift to everyone, and in our use of it, we have a responsibility towards the poor, towards future generations and towards humanity as a whole".

Pope Benedict has also addressed himself to those attending the forthcoming meetings: "I wish to encourage all the participants within the United Nations summit to enter into their discussions constructively and with generous courage. Indeed, we are all called to exercise responsible stewardship of creation, to use resources in such a way that every individual and community can live with dignity."

We need collective action. Countries that have created the problem must show the moral leadership and commitment to address it by reducing their emissions and helping those less fortunate to overcome the difficulties they face. The developed nations of the world must give the UN process to tackle climate change the highest political priority over the coming months to ensure the Copenhagen agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol achieves an equitable and binding solution.

Heads of state must commit themselves personally to attending the UN summit in Copenhagen to bring hope to those already suffering the effects of climate change, and show the political and moral leadership the world needs at this crucial time.

*The Tablet* 19<sup>th</sup> September 2009

# Ready for Rome

Elena Curti and Christopher Lamb

Last weekend, Anglicans who favour closer links with the Vatican met in London to express their delight at Pope Benedict's announcement of an Apostolic Constitution. It is what they have been working towards for more than 20 years.

They were grateful, euphoric and triumphant. The chairman of Forward in Faith UK (FiF), Bishop John Broadhurst, said the Vatican's offer was "mind-blowingly generous" and "earthshatteringly different from anything that had gone before". A priest greeted the delegates with "*Signore e signori*", and when they looked bemused, explained: "What's the problem? I'm only getting ready, you know, for Rome."

The occasion of this jubilation was the meeting in Westminster last weekend of the Church of England's traditionalist Anglo-Catholic body. Its cause was the Vatican's invitation to disaffected Anglicans to come into the Catholic fold en masse as whole parishes or even dioceses, while retaining their distinctive liturgy and heritage (including the ordination of married men). Days earlier the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) had announced plans for an Apostolic Constitution that will permit the establishment of "personal ordinariates" for traditionalist Anglicans.

The principal cause of disaffection among conservative Anglo-Catholics is the ordination of women, and in the United States the ordination of gay clergy and the blessing of same-sex couples. Last year, the Church of England's plans to ordain women bishops prompted Bishop Andrew Burnham of Ebbsfleet (a "flying bishop" who provides episcopal oversight for those Anglicans who object to women priests) to go to Rome seeking a "lifeboat". Now, he told the Westminster assembly: "We're being offered our own galleon to sail with the admiral's fleet!"

One leading light of FiF, its national secretary, the Revd Geoffrey Kirk, has said he is definitely getting on board. Father Kirk, as he likes to be known, told *The Tablet* that he intends to take advantage of the Pope's offer of an Apostolic

Constitution "come what may". He also hopes to take with him the congregation from his church in Lewisham, south-east London, which could become the first Anglican parish in England to move en masse into the Catholic Church.

But while Rome's announcement has taken many by surprise, the build-up to it has been slow and painstaking. Over the years, traditionalist Anglo-Catholics both inside and outside the Anglican Communion have been going quietly to Rome to speak to Vatican officials about their plight. Fr Kirk explained that in 1992 clergy on the FiF mailing list were sent a letter from their leaders asking them to affirm the Magisterium of the Catholic Church. The response was overwhelmingly in favour. Fr Kirk recalled that the then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, prefect of the CDF, said afterwards: "If they accept the Magisterium we have no alternative but to try and find a way of admitting them into full communion with the Catholic Church."

The bishops of Ebbsfleet and Richborough have been in "frequent and genial contact" for some time with the Rome authorities and visited the Vatican around Easter last year. In January, representatives of FiF spent two days in Vienna as guests of Cardinal Christoph Schönborn. "As we departed for London, Cardinal Schönborn flew off to Rome," Fr Kirk said.

It was in 1990 that a small group of Anglo-Catholics actually broke away from the Anglican Communion. They called themselves the Traditional Anglican Communion (TAC) and actively sought a means to go corporately to Rome. The TAC claims credit for what is now on the table for all Anglicans – and judging from the standing ovation that its primate, the Australian Archbishop John Hepworth, received, the FiF delegates acknowledged this.

Archbishop Hepworth told *The Tablet* that some of the group had been in contact with the Vatican as long as 25 years ago, when a delegation met the secretary of the newly formed Pontifical Council for Christian Unity, Bishop Pierre Duprey. He advised them to build up their numbers, nurture good relations with local Catholics and avoid having too

many bishops. Over the next 20 years, Archbishop Hepworth recalled, they grew from a presence in three countries to 41 and a membership of nearly half a million – more than 200,000 of them attending weekly Mass.

Then a Catholic priest (a married former Anglican) working in the Roman Curia advised the TAC bishops to sign a copy of the catechism as being the faith they teach, avow belief in the ministry of Peter set out in Pope John Paul II's encyclical, *Ut Unum Sint*, and acknowledge that the Church founded by Jesus Christ subsists in the Church that has the Bishop of Rome as its head (as affirmed by the Second Vatican Council). If they did all that, they would not be ignored.

In 2007, five TAC bishops prepared a letter to the Pope stating that they intended to meet later that year and expected to agree to petition Rome for full corporate Eucharistic Communion while maintaining their Anglican heritage. They posted their letter from Walsingham, and received a reply from Pope Benedict. Archbishop Hepworth said he then drafted a seven-page petition, which the TAC has agreed to keep secret until the Vatican releases it, setting out what they wanted. According to the archbishop, what is being offered by the CDF looks like an Anglican rite “even if Rome isn't using the word yet”.

On the subject of married clergy, Archbishop Hepworth said the provision would allow the new Catholic Anglican body to continue to ordain married men in perpetuity, though only celibate men could become bishops. “The provision for married priests is very important because Anglicanism has had five centuries of the family at the heart of the parish. I have written to Rome that when the family is under such threat the charism of priestly family might actually be treasured.” Training for the priesthood would be the same as for Roman Catholic men and would take place in joint seminaries, but in addition to “Anglican houses of formation to cover the uniqueness of the Anglican situation”.

TAC Masses are said *ad orientem* (facing east) and in the vernacular – “in the language of Cranmer and Shakespeare”, according to the archbishop, with a tradition of sacredness, silence and great importance attached to music. Annulments in the TAC are dealt with in the same way as under canon law, though they are quicker, taking only six months

or less; the archbishop says the speed is largely down to the TAC being such a small Church. The laity is very powerful, with diocesan and national synods legislating on everything but doctrine.

Among FiF delegates there were concerns about church property and whether whole parishes taking the Catholic option would be able to take their churches with them. Fr Kirk believed that those who cross the Tiber must ensure they keep hold of their beautiful churches. But Bishop Lindsay Urwin, administrator to the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham, believed that a squabble over buildings would be distasteful.

A few delegates expressed a desire to remain in the Church of England and fight for better provision for traditionalists in the event of the ordination of women bishops. Bishop Martyn Jarrett of Beverley, another flying bishop, said there would be a constituency that would have “theological difficulties” with a move to Rome, and that their home was in the Church of England. Sr Anne Williams explained that if she was “broken in half” like a stick of rock, you would find “Church of England” written on the inside. Fr Kirk then stood up: “If you broke the Church of England in two, you'd find the words ‘politically correct’.”

Some were worried that in their enthusiasm priests might rush headlong into an ordinariate leaving their more cautious parishioners behind. Lay readers with their special status in the Church of England wondered what would happen to them in an ordinariate. And Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali, erstwhile diocesan Bishop of Rochester, who welcomed the Vatican's overture, felt it did not go far enough.

Asked directly whether he would go to Rome, Bishop Nazir-Ali spelled out his concerns. “Is joining the ordinariate going to Rome or are Anglicans finding we believe in full communion with the Holy See? In its offer, Rome has gone further than it ever has in recognising Anglican identity. It should be pushed further still.”

In the main, FiF members have not yet completely given up on the synod. “Am I going?” asked Bishop Broadhurst rhetorically. “No, I am not. I am seeing whether we can sort this mess out once and for all this time. We are in this together.”

*The Tablet* 31 October 2009

# Reversing the liturgical field

Richard McBrien

Judging from the comments, some readers thought last week's column on the "Year for Priests" unduly pessimistic about the present state of the Catholic Church. To the contrary, one of latest developments inside the Vatican only underscores the point of that column.

According to a report late last month by Andrea Tornielli in the Italian daily *Il Giornale*, the prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, Cardinal Antonio Cañizares Llovera, met with Pope Benedict XVI on April 4 (the fact that we have a precise date is significant) to present a list of proposed changes to the liturgical norms for the celebration of the Eucharist.

The proposals were said to have been formally approved at a meeting of the congregation in March, and were designed to "restore a greater sense of the sacred" to the celebration of Mass.

Among the proposals that had been approved by the congregation in March and presented to the pope early the next month were calls to end the practices of receiving Communion in the hand and having the priest celebrate Mass facing the congregation.

Once the story was leaked to the press, however, there were denials (of sorts) from the Vatican. Undoubtedly, Vatican officials were miffed by the leak and a statement was issued by the deputy director of the Vatican Press Office, Passionist Fr. Ciro Benedettini, that said only that "for the time being there are no institutional proposals for a modification of the liturgical books used at present."

Some Vatican observers predict that the delay may last as much as a year, or until the matter quiets down.

But what is clear is that something is in the works and it is entirely consistent with what Roman sources have been hearing for some time about the pope's desire to return gradually to Communion on the tongue as the normative practice. At the same time, the Pope knows full well that such a highly controversial reversal of current practice could never be accomplished in an instant.

The practice of Communion in the hand was originally granted by the Vatican's Congregation for Divine Worship on May 29, 1969 (before it was combined with the Congregation for the Discipline of the Sacraments by Pope Paul VI in 1975), in response to requests from various episcopal conferences,

including that of the United States, and with the explicit approval of Paul VI.

Lest anyone question Benedict's personal preference in this matter, it should be pointed out that, beginning on the feast of Corpus Christi last year, those receiving Communion from the pope must do so only on the tongue. He has also expressed support for restoring the practice of the priest's celebrating Mass "facing the East," which means in plain English with his back to the people.

Given the possibility that such reversals (sometimes referred to as a "reform of the reform") will eventually be mandated, one can only imagine the confusion, frustration and anger that many priests and laypeople will experience.

Today, if individual Catholics choose to receive the sacrament on the tongue, they are free to do so. Eucharistic ministers – priests and laypeople alike – respect their wishes. The great majority, however, prefer to receive Communion in the hand and continue to do so.

But this proposal, if enacted, would actually *prevent* Catholics from making that choice for themselves. They would be denied the option, approved by Paul, that has been available to them for the past 40 years, namely, to receive Communion in the hand or on the tongue.

The so-called "John Paul II priests" would very likely be happy with such a reversal of practice and would ostentatiously deny giving Communion to those with outstretched hands. However, many other priests, whether old enough to have been shaped by Vatican II or not, would ignore the mandate and continue to distribute Communion in the hand to those who requested it.

What would happen as a result of this tug of war at Communion time? Would some bishops threaten priests with suspension? If so, how many priests would expose themselves to such a penalty? If the numbers were large, how would the church be able to compensate for the additional decline in the number of available priests?

Mandating the celebration of Mass with the priest's back to the congregation might pose an even greater problem, except in churches built before the Second Vatican Council and still with main altars facing the rear wall. But such churches are probably in the minority today. The architectural problems would be exceeded only by the pastoral dislocations.

May none of this come to pass.

© 2009 Richard P. McBrien. All rights reserved.  
Fr. McBrien is the Crowley-O'Brien Professor of Theology  
at the University of Notre Dame.

*National Catholic Reporter* 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2009

# Moore's new movie on capitalism explicit in Catholic themes

Sr. Rose Pacatte

Michael Moore's new film, *Capitalism: A Love Story*, is representative of his mockumentary style, and for some audiences, it may seem less annoying than previous films (*Bowling for Columbine*, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, *Sicko*). Still others, whose views it challenges, may resist long, hard and loud. For some, it may be considered his best work yet. (The film opens nationwide Oct. 2.)

The trailer does a fair job of conveying the essence of the film, but what may not be apparent is how much Moore's Catholicism influences the film — along with a sharp, honest critique of Christianity that even Bill Maher failed to accomplish in his lazy 2008 lampoon "Religulous".

Moore's film is a reaction/response to the Oct. 3, 2008 bailout of the U.S. financial system, The Emergency Economic Stabilization Act, and its impact on the regular people. According to Moore these people are us, 95 percent of the U.S. population. He takes solid aim at the top 1 percent who make more money than the rest of us put together. He wraps crime tape around a bank on Wall Street; he tries to arrest the CEOs of banks and financial companies. He offers up major, and verifiable, examples of greed, profit, and capitalism run amuck.

As for Moore's faith, he speaks about going to a sisters' school and wanting to be a priest growing up, wanting to make a difference. I missed the filmmaker's comment that he was influenced by Jesuit Fr. Daniel Berrigan, but *L.A. Times* critic Kenneth Turan caught it (See Turan's review now posted on Moore's Website). Moore evokes strong opinions about capitalism from two priests and briefly, Detroit's Auxiliary Bishop Thomas Gumbleton (retired): capitalism is evil. He then captures several minutes of a Chicago priest celebrating Mass for the workers of Republic Windows and Doors during their 2008 sit-ins when they held out for their wages as the company filed for bankruptcy. The priest tells them about growing up in Chicago when the steel mills were closing down and its harsh impact on his family. The juxtaposition of the Eucharist and the bishops' words as a sign of solidarity, are deeply moving.

But Moore caps all this with his own brand of irony, knowing that context is everything. He uses a few scenes from Zeffirelli's 1977 miniseries *Jesus of Nazareth* to demonstrate how false, how hypocritical Christianity sounds by having Jesus utter the words of insurance companies when, for example, they deny care. When the cripple asks to be healed, Jesus refuses, saying the man has a pre-existing condition. Citizenship is not adverse to discipleship, the clips imply. Each requires the other — or how can we possibly be living who we say we are?

Moore clearly distinguishes between capitalism as an economic system and democracy as a political system and then shows that the United States is actually a political economy and real people are suffering. What is the cure? Democracy.

There is a guide available for *Capitalism: A Love Story* in the themes of Catholic social teaching. The longer version is Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate*.

A catechist I know always says, "Everything in the Bible is true and some of it actually happened." I recommend this approach to Moore's films, as well.

*National Catholic Reporter online 1st October 2009*



# Group Reports

## EASTERN SUBURBS

Our last meeting for 2009 on 29 November was devoted to Teresa of Avila with the expert guidance of Alison Healey from The Grail. Teresa was a natural subject of interest and research for Alison because the Spanish Doctor of the Church was very much associated with the Sydney Grail whose house in North Sydney is called 'Avila'. This was in acknowledgement of the strong circumstantial evidence that Teresa played her part in allowing them to acquire the property several years ago.

Alison began by placing Teresa in her 16<sup>th</sup> century setting - a time of turmoil in the Church with Luther, Zwingli, Henry VIII and the Inquisition all in the mix. In Alison's words, this made for 'a very defensive Church'. She gave us a timeline for Teresa's life along with slides showing the walled town of Avila and a portrait of Teresa painted late in her life. Alison also distributed extracts from Teresa's writings under the headings: 'Being a woman', 'The world of action', and 'The life of the spirit', The impression of Teresa's robust common-sense and clear-headedness, as well as her formidable holiness, made a great impression. Alison recommended *Teresa of Avila* by Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams, and the good translations of all her writings published by the Carmelites and available from their monasteries. She also mentioned two volumes of her voluminous letters published some time ago and quoted a commentator on the title Doctor of the Church bestowed on her by Pope Paul VI that it is a 'Doctorate in experience' - official endorsement of, and respect for, the experience of God had had to wait until Vatican II. Many of the quotes from Teresa's writings resonated with the Group with startling modernity. Try this for example: 'The world is in flames ... this is not the time to be discussing with God matters of little importance' (from her *Ways of Perfection*).

The year of study Alison devoted to researching Teresa's life and writing paid our Group a great dividend.

Meetings will be held on 28 February and 28 March 2010 at Carmel's place at 2 pm. The rest of the year's dates will be decided at the February meeting. At the February meeting we will also finish our reading and discussion of Michael Morwood's *From Sand to Solid Ground*, with Chapters 7,8,9 prepared for today and Chapter 12. It was also suggested that we should use Michael's 'A prayer for all people' (Chapter 12) as our reflection for the meeting.

Carmel Maguire

## INNER CITY

The Inner City WATAC group held their last meeting for the year - prayer and a Christmas meal - on Monday 30 November at my house. Julie Brackenreg led us in a beautiful Advent Prayer, and then we sat down to a delicious 'bring a plate' dinner. We were joined by Anne Owens, an earlier member of our WATAC group, Sr Dom from Redfern parish and Bernice. It was a most convivial evening as usual, and conversation ranged over church, politics, what we were reading and what we might discuss for next year. It was decided to have a free-flowing arrangement for some months, with the person responsible for the prayer choosing a topic for discussion and providing the reading or necessary resources. This is in place of reading a set book, chapter by chapter.

Ten days earlier I held a fundraiser for ETWA - East Timor Women's Association - to support their weaving co-operative in rural East Timor. Half the people who came were WATAC members, and the other half CLC (Christian Life Community - Ignatian Spirituality). We sold beautiful hand woven Tais, among other items, and listened to a very good presentation and DVD by Dianna Van Gaal, also a WATAC supporter. It was a wonderful evening and inspiring to have the support of the sisterhood for our sisters in East Timor.

Margaret Cody

## WOLLONGONG

On 27 November we celebrated the end of our WATAC year with a lunch here in Thirroul.

Our celebration began with a DVD slide show of some Haiku's written by the husband of one of our group, John Flanagan. The beautiful visual images with each Haiku were provided by his friend, Yuri Koszaryez. Tenderness, humour and beautiful imagery made these reflections a spiritual gift.

During our delicious lunch which was provided by all the group we had an opportunity to speak on the phone to Judith who is still in Vietnam teaching the seminarians. What amazing experiences she is having and was able to share with us!

In keeping with our Christmas tradition we each brought something - an object or story - that had significance to share with the group.

Next year our WATAC meetings will be held in Horsley at the home of Mary Flanagan. We are grateful to Mary for this generous offer.

Jan Ryan

## LEURA

The Blue Mountains region has another wonderful asset - a WATAC Group for women and men. We had our inaugural gathering at the home of the Sisters of Charity in Leura, who have kindly offered to be our ongoing hosts; we are so fortunate.

We gathered in a spirit of joy, realising that we are church and God is with us when we meet together. Bernice guided us through the morning of re-flection, discussion and prayer. We decided to meet on the fourth Saturday morning of the month 10am-12pm at Leura and will start on the 27th February 2010.

We talked about shared leadership in the group and have decided to read and discuss Michael Morwood's book *From Sand to Solid Ground* during the first few months of next year. We are pleased that Bernice will be joining us on future occasions and she will be most welcome.

At the close of our gathering we read together 'What is our dream a century from now? Who shall the shapers have been?' (Lilian Smith, *The Journey*, 1954).

*Carmel Vanny*

## MILTON ULLADULLA

Our year finished on Nov. 21<sup>st</sup> with a meeting at Anna Flynn's. We watched a DVD of the film *Priest*. It is the confronting story of a young, keen priest sent to a large depressed parish in Liverpool, England. It portrays the pressures he faced, and the dichotomy of the reality he was facing versus the church and a very remote bishop. It fitted in with Chapter six of *Confronting Power and Sex in the Catholic Church*.

Bernice ably led us through both the DVD and the chapter. She then gave us a summary of answers to the Action paper on the changes to the Mass - responses we could have written ourselves. We brought all this to a Liturgy to conclude our meeting.

To finish the year we gathered in Anna and Bob's garden to plant a remembrance tree for our beautiful member, Pauline Holahan, who died earlier in the year. Her husband Cecil joined us as did Laurie Sheppherd whose wife Joan, also a former member, is remembered in the garden.

We then enjoyed high tea to conclude our year together.

*Kath Prendergast*

## BROKEN BAY

Our last meeting of the year on 29 November was very enjoyable as always, despite reduced numbers as family events often take precedence at this time of the year. After our lively "communion" lunch, Bernice led us in a beautiful liturgy titled "Let's celebrate Life" with reflections, hymns, poems and my favourite prayer "We cannot merely pray to you O God" - all so much more meaningful than the usual fare at a parish Sunday Mass.

We discussed the responses to the WATAC survey on Paul Collins' booklet *And also with you* which reflected so well our general concern at the lack of consultation with the laity, the introduction of archaic language and the obvious intent to return to a pre-Vatican II form of worship.

We were not surprised when Maree shared with us the news that the young Broken Bay seminarian, Chris Knapman (who attended one of our meetings earlier in the year), is taking time out to consider his vocation to the priesthood after four years' formation. He is the only one of three to have survived this long, which does not auger well for our priest-starved communities.

We were saddened by the news that OCW (Ordination of Catholic Women) is closing down. They have done sterling work in challenging the hierarchy on the injustices of the present system but, not surprisingly, have exhausted their energies.

If we are into New Year resolutions, perhaps it could be to make future meetings more focussed to get balance between learning and talking!

Our next meeting will be the second Sunday in February.

*Margaret Knowlden*

## GROUPS

### ENGADINE

Our last meeting this year was a 'fun one' where we celebrated who we are as a group; we shared a meal and reflected on the message of Advent. Judy kindly provided us all with musical 'instruments' of doubtful tone to support our singing of some Christmas carols - the 'Choir of Hard Knocks' really needs to be worried! We took time out during the meeting to all write our reflections on WATAC in 2009; some of these were:

- ◆ 'This is a group of wonderful women of whom I love being part.'
- ◆ 'This is Church for me.'
- ◆ 'The friendship and acceptance enables me to feel part of the group.'
- ◆ 'In WATAC, I feel "at home".'
- ◆ 'Having the opportunity to meet with like-minded people gives you the strength to continue on in our Church and to pursue change from within.'
- ◆ 'Being part of this group has been fun and most of all it is mind-opening to new ways of journeying in Faith.'
- ◆ 'The group provides food for my spirit.'

This year we studied Bishop Robinson's book and Albert Nolan's *Jesus Today*. Both of these enabled us to share our journeys in faith and to discuss topical issues relevant to our Church today. Albert Nolan's book provided a real challenge for us to get in touch with our inner selves. One WATAC-er wrote:

- ◆ 'I welcomed this book with open arms. It was what I wanted and needed to read.'

Another aspect of our regular meetings much valued by our members is our 'Reflection' time. As one wrote:

- ◆ 'Our Reflections always strike some special chord in me and create hope for what might be - can be, if we will keep going forward together'.

Our first meeting in 2010 will concentrate on what we see as the 'Emerging Church' and we will discuss what resources will support this topic for us.

*Bernice Moore*

**BANNOCKBURN (South Brisbane):** This is still a tentative group which hopes to meet every two months on a Saturday at 2 pm at Therese Flynn-Clarke's home, 18 Thwaites St. Bannockburn 4207 (07)3804 0636 [dctfc@optusnet.com.au](mailto:dctfc@optusnet.com.au)

**BROKEN BAY Group (Upper North Shore):** Group meets on a Sunday about every two months starting at 12.30 pm with lunch. Venue: 32 Awatea Road, St Ives Chase. Contact: Margaret Knowlden 02 9449 7275 Email: [knowlden@optusnet.com.au](mailto:knowlden@optusnet.com.au)

**EASTERN SUBURBS Group.** This group usually meets on a Sunday 2pm-4.30pm monthly. Meetings dates for 2010 are 28<sup>th</sup> February & 28<sup>th</sup> March (rest to be decided). Venue: 8 Dudley Street, Randwick. Contact: Carmel Maguire 02 9398 1004 Email: [c.maguire@unsw.edu.au](mailto:c.maguire@unsw.edu.au)

**ENGADINE Group** meets on the third Monday of the month in a member's home at 7.30pm. Contact: Margaret Keyes: 02 9520 4240 Email: [keyes888@bigpond.com](mailto:keyes888@bigpond.com) Engadine group members also meet every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of the month at 10am for Prayer and Reflection: for more information contact Alma Madden 02 9520 8684 Email: [admin@watac.net](mailto:admin@watac.net)

**INNER CITY Group** meets at 62 Boyce St, Glebe at 7pm on third Monday of each month. Contact: Margaret Cody 02 9692 9384 Mobile: 0419 426 174 Email: [margaret.cody1@bigpond.com](mailto:margaret.cody1@bigpond.com)

**LEURA Group** meets 4th Saturday morning of the month 10am-12pm at 227 The Mall, Leura. Contact person - Carmel Vanny, 1 Kanimbla St. Blackheath 2785 (02) 47878706 [cvanny@tech2U.com.au](mailto:cvanny@tech2U.com.au)

**LISMORE HEIGHTS Group** meets 1st Tuesday of each month for coffee & spiritual nourishment at 'La Baracca Coffee Shop' 29 Keen Street, Lismore. Contact: Mary Bruggy 02 6624 6530 Email: [marytbruggy@optusnet.com.au](mailto:marytbruggy@optusnet.com.au)

**MANLY Group** usually meet on the second Saturday of the month at 2pm at 2/36 Upper Fairfax Road, Mosman. Contact: Camille Paul 02 9969 2125 Email: [camken@bigpond.com](mailto:camken@bigpond.com)

**MILTON/ULLADULLA Group** usually have meetings on Saturday from 10 - 4. Venue: Varies each meeting. For further information 02 4456 4445 Email: [powe@zip.com.au](mailto:powe@zip.com.au)

**MOUNT CLAREMONT (W.A.)** Contact: Margaret Finlay (08) 9384 9114 Email: [finlaymarg@hotmail.com](mailto:finlaymarg@hotmail.com)

**PARRAMATTA Group** meets on the last Monday of the month from Feb to November at the Convent Parramatta from 7.30 - 9.30. Contact: Margaret Hinchey 02 9890 7903 Email [mhinchey@lifequestoz.net](mailto:mhinchey@lifequestoz.net)

**PENSHURST Group** meets at 7.30 on the fourth Monday of every month at 5/30-32 Grove Avenue, Narwee. Contact: Bernice Moore Email: [bernice@watac.net](mailto:bernice@watac.net) or Maureen Hager 02 9580 5384: [maureen\\_hager@optusnet.com.au](mailto:maureen_hager@optusnet.com.au)

**WAGGA WAGGA Group** meet at Wagga Wagga on the first Monday of the month at 7.30pm at Ros Bennett's, 14 Tarakan Avenue. Contact: Rosslyn Bennett. Email [rosbennett@ozemail.com.au](mailto:rosbennett@ozemail.com.au)

**WOLLONGONG Group** meets on the 4th Saturday of every month February to November at Thirroul, 2pm - 4.30pm. Contact: Jan Ryan 02 4268 5965 Email: [jjryan@iprimus.com.au](mailto:jjryan@iprimus.com.au)

**YOUNG:** This Group has recently started. For information contact Pat Cudmore 02 6383 3205 Email: [pat.cudmore@cg.catholic.org.au](mailto:pat.cudmore@cg.catholic.org.au) or Kerry Ray 02 6382 5460

**REMINDER – WATAC SUBSCRIPTIONS  
FOR 2010  
ARE DUE FOR RENEWAL**

NOTE: WATAC is a non-profit organisation and is GST exempt

**We thank our subscribers for your continued support.  
Subscriptions and donations make it  
possible for WATAC to continue its work.**

---

**SUBSCRIPTION FORM**

**PLEASE PRINT**

NAME: .....

ADDRESS: ..... POSTCODE: .....

PH(H): ..... EMAIL: .....

BASIC MEMBERSHIP \$50 GROUP MEMBERSHIP \$150 SELF RELIANCE MEMBERSHIP \$75 \$100 \$150

Please make cheques payable to WATAC Inc. If using Credit Card please complete the following details.

Mastercard    Visa    AMOUNT: \$.....

Card Number: \_\_ \_\_ \_\_ \_\_ / \_\_ \_\_ \_\_ \_\_ / \_\_ \_\_ \_\_ \_\_    **Expiry Date:** \_\_ \_\_ / \_\_ \_\_

Cardholder's Name: (Please Print) .....

Cardholder's Signature: .....

**Automatic Credit Card renewal** – by ticking this box you will be authorising WATAC to automatically renew your subscription each year in January. WATAC will use the credit card details provided here for the equivalent amount of your original subscription. Please notify WATAC of any changes to your credit card details.

**e-newsletter** – tick here if you would prefer to receive your WATAC Newsletter by email. It comes as a pdf file in full colour to your email address.

**Please write your email address clearly**

Email address: .....

e-information- we sometimes get requests from 'like-minded' organisations to forward information please indicate:

**Yes – I wish to receive other information via email**

**No – I do not wish to receive other email information**

**PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM WITH PAYMENT TO:**

**The Subscription Secretary WATAC Inc. 9 Casey Close Kurri Kurri 2327**

**Ph: 02.4937.2019 Fax: 02.4936.1109 Email: maureen@watac.net**

**I would like to continue to receive WATAC News but am not able to contribute at present**

---